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TITLE: Innovative Interventions in Health Education, Counseling and Testing to Reach Guam's Hard To Reach Populations

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ISSUE: Guam population continues to fear HIV testing due to the cultural issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. Expansion of counseling and testing services utilizing the Orasure Method of Testing combining Outreach education is an intervention that will reduce the fear, stigma and fear of HIV testing in Guam's culturally diverse transient populations. A comparison of site based anonymous/confidential testing versus field-testing and outreach education is used to determine if this intervention reaches the targeted groups identified by 1999 Guam Community Planning Group.

SETTING: Guam, a U.S. Territory in the Pacific Basin is part of the Micronesian Islands. Micronesia comprises 6 U.S. affiliated island jurisdictions with over fifteen (15) Pacific cultures. Guam is the most advanced in Western technology and knowledge. The intervention will take place at identified sites by key informants such as public environments, streets, bars, beach parks, clubs, village centers, etc. Intended target audience are: injection drug users and their partners, underground sex industry, men sex men population (including bisexual men, transgender) and, partners of people living with HIV/AIDS.

PROJECT: To address this issue, Guam Public Health STD/HIV Prevention staff will a) review current literature on U.S. States' Public Health Interventions utilizing Orasure and outreach education interventions, b) utilize key informants within the hidden populations to conduct outreach education and promotion of Orasure Testing, c) provide culturally appropriate health education programming, counseling and testing utilizing Orasure at identified locations and, d) evaluation.

RESULTS: Since 1997, literature on Orasure method of testing has been reviewed by the Program Staff. Between 1992-1999, building contacts with key informants to determine the situation of IDUs, Men Sex Men, Sex Industry Workers and Micronesians have occurred. Program Staff identified 5 locations to conduct Orasure Testing and outreach education.

LESSONS LEARNED: Guam Public Health utilizes the Elisa Method of Testing at a designated anonymous and counseling testing site. CTS services are based upon the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Guidelines on Counseling and Testing. The new intervention utilizing Orasure testing to expand the current CTS services to the hidden populations most at risk for HIV/AIDS mentioned has been chosen as an alternative testing option to reach Guam's culturally diverse populations. This move to expand services to the hidden populations is needed in order to make testing more accessible and reduce the fear of HIV/AIDS in an island community.

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